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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5847
INFO RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 8307
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 7480
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 2975
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 9268
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 5078
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 3786
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 001114

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/11/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: POTENTIAL PUNJAB CHIEF MINISTER SHAHBAZ SHARIF

REF: A. LAHORE 84

- [1](#)B. ISLAMABAD 226
- [1](#)C. ISLAMABAD 584
- [1](#)D. ISLAMABAD 009
- [1](#)E. 07 ISLAMABAD 5388
- [1](#)F. 07 ISLAMABAD 5138
- [1](#)G. LAHORE 733
- [1](#)H. ISLAMABAD 745

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: This is one of several profiles on Pakistani politicians who will have a significant role in shaping the new government.

[1](#)2. (C) Shahbaz Sharif, brother of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, is a PML-N heavyweight who intends to be Punjab's next Chief Minister. Although he currently does not hold a Provincial Assembly seat, Shahbaz plans to run in a by-election to qualify himself for the position. End summary.

[1](#)3. (C) Shahbaz is the younger brother of Nawaz Sharif. Although Nawaz is "Quaid" (Supreme Leader) of the party, Shahbaz is the official President of the PML-N. The PML-N did especially well in the recent parliamentary elections, garnering 67 (almost 25%) of the National Assembly seats. The Sharif brothers intend to wield their restored political clout within Punjab Province, with Shahbaz at the province's helm. An eloquent interlocutor (REF F), Shahbaz often appears more articulate, intelligent, and energetic than his elder brother. He says he is willing to work closely with the United States in combating terrorism, as he and his brother also have been the targets of terrorism (REF A).

Murky Legal Status

[1](#)4. (C) Shahbaz did not contest the February 18, 2008 elections because the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) deemed him ineligible, based on the grounds that he has pending criminal charges (REF C). In January 2001 Shahbaz was charged--but never convicted--of being involved in a April 1998 clash with police in Sabza Zar (near Lahore) that resulted in the death of five people. Shahbaz says the ECP rejected his papers because of government pressure, and he decided not to appeal the decision, claiming it meant recognizing Musharraf's illegal courts (REF F). NSA Tariq Aziz, however, told Charge and Polcouns in January 2008 (REF B) he believed Shahbaz would have won an appeal to the

Election Commission. Aziz views Shahbaz as a good Punjab administrator who is sharper than his brother, but opined that Shahbaz can be "difficult" and is rumored to be on medication for psychological problems.

15. (C) Shahbaz is likely to resubmit candidacy papers and run in a by-election (REF G) to secure a seat in the Provincial Assembly--which is necessary before he can be named Chief Minister. Shahbaz told Principal Officer Lahore that he expects the PML-N will lend support to a PPP Prime Minister Candidate in exchange for their support for his bid for Punjab Chief Minister (REF A). In the same conversation Shahbaz claimed his party had no interest in impeaching Musharraf as long as the President did not block restoration of the 1973 constitution (which would increase Prime Ministerial powers) and restoration of the judiciary. (Comment: Some speculate that Musharraf was (and continues to be) amenable to working with Shahbaz, but Nawaz has rejected this option, fearing his brother's influence might outstrip his own. End Comment.)

Career and Personal History

16. (C) In 2000, Shahbaz and his brother were exiled from Pakistan and spent the next seven years in Saudi Arabia and London. Shahbaz attempted to return to Pakistan in May 2004 following a High Court decision but was deported back to Saudi Arabia upon his plane's arrival in Lahore. Shahbaz and his brother retain excellent business and personal relations with the Saudi royal family. Saudi money reputedly financed the Sharif's parliamentary campaign (REF H) and Shahbaz has met with the Saudi Ambassador in Lahore to discuss PML-N political strategy (REF B).

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17. (C) Shahbaz was Chief Minister of Punjab from 1997 to 1999; he was widely considered to be an efficient administrator. Shahbaz's appointment as Chief Minister reputedly is the genesis for the rift between the Sharifs and the Chaudharys (of the PML). Chaudhry Shujaat complains that Nawaz promised to make his cousin, Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, Chief Minister in exchange for their support. Shujaat accuses Nawaz Sharif of breaking his word and appointing Shahbaz instead (REF E). Shahbaz was Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly (1993-96) during Benazir Bhutto's second term as Prime Minister. He was elected to the National Assembly (1990-1993) during Nawaz's first administration, where he earned a reputation as the government's behind-the-scenes troubleshooter. He held a seat in the Punjab Provincial Assembly (1988-1990), and was elected President of the Lahore Chambers of Commerce (1985). Shahbaz, a keen businessman, also manages the Ittefaq Group of Companies, which was founded by his fathers and uncles.

18. (C) Shahbaz's passport indicates he was born on September 23, 1951. He studied at the Government College Lahore and at Punjab University. He has been married three times: to his cousin Nusrat (in 1973), to Aaliya Honey (in 1993), and to Tehmina Durrani. Shahbaz's last two marriages damaged his political standing. His marriage to Tehmina raised eyebrows for two reasons: first, it was a third marriage for both of them (as Shahbaz has not divorced his first wife) and second, Tehmina is well-known for her best-selling tell-all book, "My Feudal Lord," which is an indictment of her prior husband. Shahbaz has three daughters and two sons, Salman and Hamza, with his first wife. His son, Hamza, also is politically active. Shahbaz knows several languages including English, Arabic, German, and Russian.

PATTERSON